

The agreement—not really a compromise—slashes discretionary spending and tinkers with a few other things like raising fees on airline tickets, decreasing reimbursement to Medicare providers, and lowering military retirement pensions. How could we actually think this is the kind of path forward for our country?

There is no attempt to close tax loopholes on corporate jet or on expenses of oil and gas companies, and makes no effort in asking the wealthiest among us to pay their fair share to live in an orderly, humane, equitable society. Favored corporate interests, millionaires, and billionaires will continue to receive special tax breaks as far as the eye can see while unemployment insurance expires, leaving millions struggling to find work out in the cold just weeks after Christmas. That is not the sort of fair, balanced deal that Americans have asked for and expect from their leaders.

IT'S THE MOST WONDERFUL TIME OF THE YEAR

HON. TED POE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 16, 2013

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, it's the most wonderful time of the year. Families across the fruited plain decorate their houses with red and green lights, hang ornaments on their trees, and think about new recipes to spice up this year's menu. Holiday party invitations flow in, carolers line the neighborhood streets at night, everybody is in the holiday spirit. In the midst of all the cheer, we are reminded that many families are sitting down this year to a table with an empty chair. They are not together because their loved ones (our American warriors) are oceans away from their families, fighting for the rest of us.

They say the worst casualty of war is to be forgotten. In our community we have a tradition to make sure that our men and women overseas know that we will never forget them. For seven straight years, Texans from the Second Congressional District and beyond have joined forces and collected handmade Christmas cards from the community to send overseas to our military. People from young school children to community leaders contribute, and this joint effort makes my annual Christmas Cards for Troops drive a success. Whether they are students, teachers, area Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, churches, and non-profits, they have been relentless in their efforts to express how grateful they are for our men and women on the front lines of battle by decorating and personalizing holiday cards for the troops. In my opinion, there's no better way than spreading the joy of the holidays overseas to the ones that can't be with their families for Christmas dinner and unwrapping gifts from under the tree. Each year is better than the last.

There is no greater sight than watching our troops open up the colorful, heartwarming cards. It wasn't until a few years ago that I witnessed firsthand what it means to them. One year, I decided to pack my bags and visit the Landstuhl Military Base in Germany, a hub for wounded Americans who come from Afghanistan and Iraq. With me, I carried two suitcases full of 6,000 handmade cards piled high from

third, fourth, and fifth graders of the Second Congressional District.

I checked one of my suitcases but decided to carry on the smaller of the two. The temptation to read the cards overtook me. I couldn't hold back so about half way through the flight, I opened the bag and began reading some of the cards. Curiosity sparked the person in the seat next to me so I shared a few of the cards with him. Then the person next to him wanted to see the cards, too. Before I knew it, the whole plane was reading them. The cards were being passed up and down the aisles, and some tears were shed. You wouldn't believe the kind words written in those cards by these Texas school children.

When I arrived at the base and hand-delivered these cards, I was amazed to see what they meant to our troops. They didn't personally know the child who the card was from but every one of them read it and smiled proudly at the words of support. Soon, nurses were scrambling to tape as many cards as they could to the hospital walls above their beds. Red, green, yellow, and blue cards were decorated with snowmen, gingerbread men, candy canes, menorahs, or even their favorite football team. There is something about a homemade card that doesn't compare to anything else, especially when it's from a child.

This year was our most successful card drive yet with a record-breaking collection of 113,000 cards. A special thank you City of Baytown, Goose Creek CISD, Humble ISD, Spring ISD, Huffman ISD, Klein ISD, Cy Fair ISD, Spring Branch ISD, as well as area Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops, local churches and non-profits. It could not have been done without them.

In a few weeks, hundreds of thousands of soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines will open up their packages from Operation Interdependence, along with their holiday card from a fellow Texan. Although the military member has never met the child or person on the other side of the world who took the time to create the card, there is nothing like receiving the holiday cheer from the land of the free and home of the brave.

And that's just the way it is.

ANNOUNCING RECIPIENTS OF THE 2013 CONGRESSIONAL VETERAN COMMENDATION FOR THE THIRD DISTRICT OF TEXAS

HON. SAM JOHNSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 16, 2013

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to honor fourteen distinguished military veterans, community servants, and American patriots who call the Third District of Texas home. All faithfully answered the call of duty and placed service above self for the sake of our great nation. Each one leaves a legacy to be remembered, for future generations to follow, a legacy of bravery, loyalty, dedication, and sacrifice. For their selfless service, bold leadership, and undying commitment for their neighbor and nation, the following individual has been selected as a recipient of the third annual Congressional Veteran Commendation:

Serving in the United States Navy for ten years, Commander Jeff Hensley began his

military career after graduating from the University of Texas in August 1988. After finishing top of his class in flight school, he was assigned to fly an F-14 and deployed with Fighter Squadron 2 and 211. He later moved to Dallas where he served with the Navy Recruiting Office, which led him to Baghdad in 2005. From deployment to civilian services, Mr. Hensley has seen the whole spectrum of military service. Due to his exemplary leadership and patriotism, Hensley was awarded the Bronze Star, an Air Medal, and three Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medals.

Having retired from active duty in 2008, his service to his country and the military continue to this day. He used the benefits of the new GI Bill to earn a master's degree in counseling to help other veterans make the transition from military life to civilian life. With his degree, Mr. Hensley worked with Rocky Top Equine therapy program and Equest's Hooves for Heroes program, where he serves as Program Coordinator. Furthermore, he now serves as the Texas head of the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans Association, IAVA, which serves over 10,000 IAVA members in Texas alone. Daily, he seeks the betterment of his fellow veterans and their families. His life work leaves a legacy to be honored, setting an example for future generations of a man whose commitment to serve never faded. IAVA's motto, "building the next greatest generation" couldn't be more fitting.

Commander Jeff Hensley, let me both thank and congratulate you on your exceptional service to our country and community both past and present. It is my pleasure to award you the 2013 Congressional Veteran Commendation for the Third District of Texas.

RECOGNIZING THE WEYER- HAEUSER COMPANY, RECENTLY NAMED ONE OF THE MOST COM- MUNITY-MINDED COMPANIES IN THE NATION

HON. ADAM SMITH

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 16, 2013

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor and congratulate the Weyerhaeuser Company for being recognized as one of the most community-minded companies in the United States. The National Conference on Citizenship and Points of Light, in partnership with Bloomberg named Weyerhaeuser to The Civic 50 list as one of 50 companies that have demonstrated socially responsible practices and substantial civic involvement in their communities.

The Weyerhaeuser Company, based in Federal Way, Washington, began more than a century ago in the forest industry. The company currently owns and operates nearly 21 million acres of timberland with offices throughout North America and produces wood and fiber products for a variety of applications.

Weyerhaeuser also makes giving back to the community a company priority. Through the Weyerhaeuser Active Volunteer Employees (WAVES) Program, the company recognizes employee volunteers who contribute their time. The organizations where employees volunteer are also eligible to apply for WAVES grants, ranging from \$1,000 to \$5,000. Last